

I-80 Lakes Southwest District

2010 Survey Summary



Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

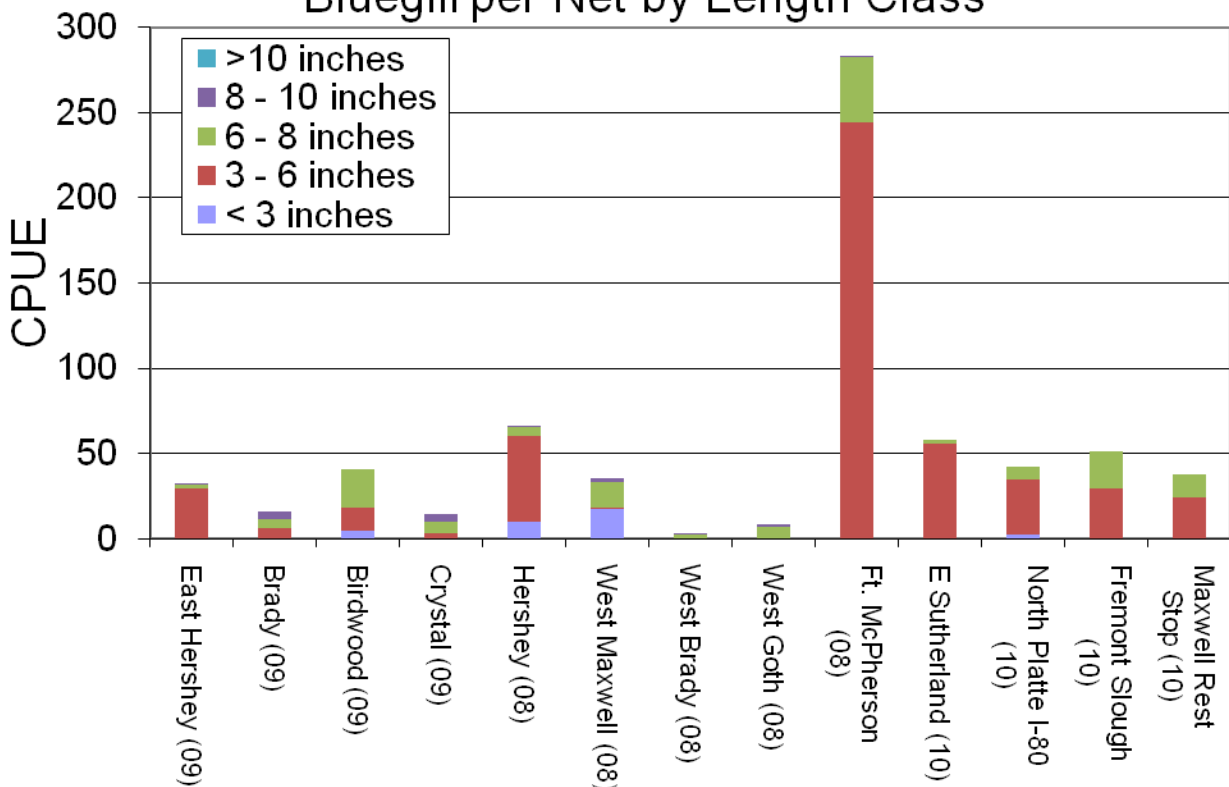
Caleb Huber, Fisheries Biologist

Bluegill

Bluegill are present in all of the I-80 lakes across the South West District. They serve as the primary prey item for larger predatory species. Bluegill are also a favorite for anglers especially through the ice. Bluegill are multiple spawners and are most easily caught off of spawning beds during the warmer months. Bluegill tend to school during the winter and favor deeper water or submerged cover. Statewide regulations apply to most interstate lakes although West Brady and East Hershey have been designated as catch-and-release-only lakes. Consult the fishing guide for special regulations



Bluegill per Net by Length Class

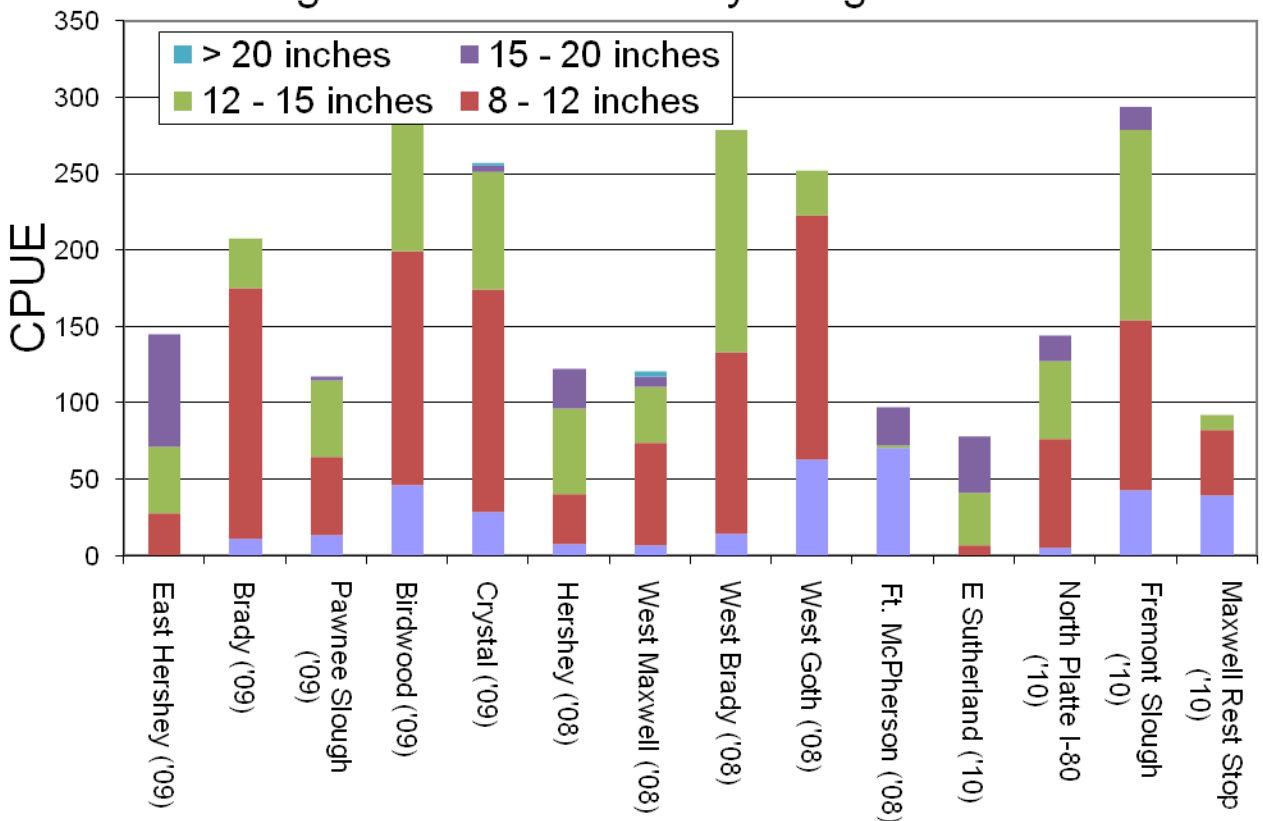


Largemouth Bass

Largemouth bass are present in all of the I-80 lakes across the Southwest District. However, there are other predatory species available at various interstate lakes. Largemouth bass are favored by anglers because of their aggressive nature and hard-fighting attitude. Largemouth bass can be caught on a myriad of live and artificial baits that mimic baitfish or crawfish. Largemouth can also be tempted to bite on artificials that appeal to their aggressive nature or invade their territory. **Statewide regulations for largemouth bass in inland waters are 15-inch or 21-inch minimum length (check local regulations), 4 fish daily bag, and 8 fish possession with no more than one fish over 21 inches in the daily bag. Also, West Brady and East Hershey are catch-and-release-only beginning in 2010.**



Largemouth Per Hour by Length Class





Other Fish

Channel Catfish

Channel catfish are stocked regularly into most of the I-80 lakes. These fish are grown to 10 inches before stocking to limit predation by largemouth bass. Fish are stocked every other year to maintain fishable populations for anglers. Beginning in 2011, the statewide daily bag limit is 5 channel catfish.

Redear Sunfish

Redear sunfish are found in several of the I-80 lakes such as East Hershey, Crystal, West Brady, Fort McPherson, and West Gothenberg. Redear favor clear water and underwater vegetation and can grow to 12 inches or greater under the right conditions. Redear tend to be less aggressive than bluegill which can make them harder to catch particularly through the ice.

Rock Bass

Rock bass are an unique species that are rare throughout most of the state. There are some interstate lakes with fishable populations of rock bass. Rock bass are located in Hershey, East Sutherland, and East Hershey.

Rainbow Trout

Rainbow trout are stocked into Birdwood Lake each year to provide an unique winter fishery. Trout are stocked twice each year for a total of 8000 fish annually. There is no length limit and the bag limit is 5 fish daily with a possession limit of 10 and only one fish 16 inches or longer in the daily bag.



Examples of invasive vegetation and chemical control

Vegetation Control and Angler Access

Interstate lakes are open year-round for fishing and many of them are surrounded by wildlife areas that can provide various hunting and viewing opportunities. Most lakes have primitive boat ramps that are suitable for smaller boats. It is important to note that regulations vary from lake to lake for boat access. Please check the fishing guide before launching. There are several small waters that are classified as “family friendly” in the 2010 fishing guide. These fisheries have good access and would be a good place for beginning anglers or those planning a family outing.

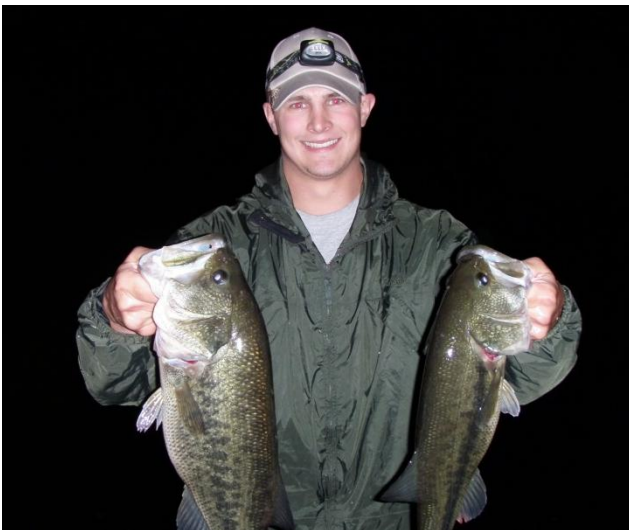
Recently, Game and Parks biologists have begun applying herbicide to some shorelines in order to improve access and control invasive species such as *Phragmites* spp. Effective treatment can take several years depending on plant height and stand density. We have achieved good results and will continue herbicide treatments as necessary. Above are some pictures from past treatments to illustrate the amount of vegetation and the results of chemical controls. **Its is also important to remind anglers that there is no trash pickup at the areas; please clean up after yourselves.**



Brushing Projects

Several of the interstate lakes in the Southwest District have been enhanced with brush piles to concentrate fish for anglers. Trees are usually cut from surrounding wildlife management areas and positioned on the ice. These trees are weighted and allowed to melt and sink through the ice. The brush piles are especially attractive to panfish during the summer and winter months.

Hershey, West Maxwell, West Gothenberg, Crystal, Brady, West Brady, Hershey, East Hershey, and Fort Mcpherson all have at least some brush piles, and the list continues to grow each year.



I-80 Research

Beginning in 2010 the Nebraska Game and Parks and University of Nebraska-Kearney began a research project to assess the potential of yellow perch fisheries along the interstate corridor. This project is in response to angler requests to increase panfishing opportunities in local waterbodies. The objectives of this study are to determine predation of yellow perch by largemouth bass, and growth rates of yellow perch in interstate lakes. This research is in its initial stages; hopefully, the results gained will lead to improved panfish management along the interstate corridor.

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